CHAPTER 10

Evil in the Hebrew Bible, Mishnah, and Talmud

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INTRODUCTION

In essence, the Jewish principle of good and evil, as reflected in the Hebrew Bible, Mishnah, and Talmud, emphasizes "good" and is based on God's words in Genesis 1:10: "God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together He called Seas. And God saw that *it was good.*" In the traditional Jewish texts, God appears to be concerned with the human ability to separate the good from the evil and act in accordance with certain guidelines. According to biblical thought, God gives us a list of 613 rules, which tell us what to do and what *not* to do (*mitzvoth*), and by following all 613 of them we can either prevent doing evil or make retribution for it.

> Evil is not man's ultimate problem. Man's ultimate problem is his relation to God. . . . The biblical answer to evil is not the good but the holy. It is an attempt to raise man to a higher level of existence, where man is not alone when confronted with evil. (Heschel, 1987, p. 376)

With regard to the concept of evil, the Torah (the first five books of the Hebrew Bible) deals primarily with broad rules and regulations for his followers to obey rather than the problem of the existence of evil in the world. Indeed, of the 389 times the words *evil* or *evildoer* are used in the entire Hebrew Bible, only 29 occur in the Torah. In comparison, of the 451 times the word *good* appears in the Hebrew Bible, 86 occur in the first five books. In the later books, however, when the focus shifts to the individual

vis-à-vis God, the issue of good and evil in a world governed by a benevolent and omnipotent God becomes more evident. Jeremiah, Isaiah, Job, and the Psalms question the prosperity of the wicked and the adversity of the righteous. Various answers are given, many of which were elaborated upon by the Talmudists[1] and the philosophers, but the idea of a heavenly reward for good or eternal damnation for evil does not appear to be offered in the Bible as a possible solution.

Despite the lack of a sustained discussion of evil in the Torah, there is a biblical basis to the idea of the existence in human nature of an instinctive tendency or impulse that, left to itself, would lead to one's undoing by acting contrary to the will of God (*yezer ha-ra*, or "inclination to evil"). Gen 6:5 reads that "every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts [humankind] is only evil continually," and this is reinforced in Gen 8:21, "for the inclination of the human heart is evil from his youth." The doctrine of two inclinations (or drives) is a major feature of Jewish thought. According to the rabbis,[2] humans were created with two opposing inclinations or tendencies, one toward the good and the other toward evil, as discussed below.

To confuse matters further, according to the Talmud, despite the fact that our natural inclinations are "evil," they are given by God and thus should not be eliminated completely. These basic impulses are the impetus for marriage, procreation, and our very livelihood. However, when our thoughts turn to "evil" rather than "sanctioned" desires, the Talmud instructs that the study of the Torah is an effective antidote (Kid 30b). Again, according to the Talmud, unless the *yeẓer ha-ra* is checked and controlled, it will grow out of control. To quote,

> R. Simeon b. Lakish stated, "The Evil Inclination of a man grows in strength from day to day and seeks to kill him . . . and were it not that the Holy One, blessed be He, is his help, he would not be able to withstand it." (Suk 52b)

According to the rabbinic writings, the evil inclination is an entirely earthly phenomenon: "In the world to come there is no eating or drinking, procreation or barter, envy or hate" (Ber 17a). However, the *yeẓer ha-ra* can be considered as having originated by other than humans—in Genesis 3, the serpent seems to exhibit an evil inclination when it tempts humankind to eat the forbidden fruit.

The apparent contradiction of the existence of "evil" in a "good" world that God created poses a conundrum: attempts to reconcile belief in a deity who, after creating the world, "saw that it was good" (Gen 1:10) with the same deity who says in Isa 45:6–7, "I make peace, and create evil." Why create evil? The Talmudists begin their explanation with an analysis of the creation of evil. For example:

> R. Akiba said: Four directions were created for the world, and they are east, south, west, and north. East is the direction from which light emerges for the world. South is the direction from which dews of blessing and rains of blessing emerge for the world. West (is the direction) wherein the treasuries of heat and cold are situated. North is the direction from which darkness comes forth for the world, and it is the habitation of harmful entities, spirits, and demons, and it is from that direction that evil emerges into the world, as scripture attests: "Evil will initiate from the north" (Jer 1:14). (Mann, 1971, p. 13)

Baba Bathra gives a more elaborate form of this same tradition. There God deliberately leaves the northern quadrant "unfinished" and invites all those entities who think they are "gods" to replicate his creative activities. None is able to meet this challenge, and so the "north" becomes the domicile of demons, spirits, and various natural disasters:

> The northern quadrant (of the world): from there darkness issues forth onto the world, and it is there that specters, devils, demons, spirits, and horrors have their abode, and it is from there that an evil spirit comes out into the world. While the Holy One, blessed be He, was responsible for creating the northern quadrant, He did not finish it. Why did He not complete it? He reasoned: "Unless there should come some entity styling himself 'god' to the world and who claims 'I am God!!' [If that happens], then he can finish the quadrant, (and) then everyone will know that he is truly God!" (Pirqe R El §3)

Another problem for the rabbis was the issue of a lack of a just distribution of good and evil to the righteous and wicked respectively. One particularly problematic verse is Exod 33:19: "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." Once again, the Talmud offers possible solutions. Based on the biblical reference "Neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers" (Deut 24:16), R. Johanan stated,

> A righteous man who prospers is a perfectly righteous man; the righteous man who is in adversity is not a perfectly righteous man. The wicked man who prospers is not a perfectly wicked man; the wicked man who is in adversity is a perfectly wicked man.

On the other hand, R. Meir quoted Exod. 33:19 as follows:

> [O]nly two [requests] were granted to him [Moses], and one was not granted to him. For it is said: "And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, although he may not deserve it, And I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." (Ber 7a)

Meir interpreted "although he may not deserve it" to mean that "God's ways therefore cannot be known" (Ber 7a).

Genesis Rabbah blames evil on Satan in a rather circuitous interpretation of why Jacob had to dwell in Egypt:

> R. Aha said: "When the righteous wish to dwell in tranquility in this world, Satan comes and accuses them: They are not content with what is in store for them in the Hereafter, but they wish to dwell at ease even in this world! The proof lies in the fact that the Patriarch Jacob wished to live at ease in this world, whereupon he was attacked by Joseph's Satan; and Jacob dwelt in the land." (Gen R 84:3)

While recognizing the ambiguities in conflicting biblical passages regarding evil and suffering, the rabbis make a concerted effort to emphasize that God and His creation are good. Ber. 60b, for example, stated, "It was taught in the name of R. Akiba: 'A man should always accustom himself to say "'Whatever the All-Merciful does is for good.'" Ber. 60b then elaborated.

> Indeed, one should "bless for the evil in the same way as for the good . . . we have learnt: for good tidings one says, who is good and bestows good: for evil tidings one says, blessed be the true judge?"—Raba said: "What it really means is that one must receive the evil with gladness" . . . Where do we find this in the Scripture? "I will sing of mercy and justice, unto Thee, O Lord, will I sing praises," (Ps 60:1) whether it is "mercy" I will sing, or whether it is "justice" I will sing. "In the Lord I will praise His word, in God I will praise His word" (Ps 61:11). "In the Lord I will praise His word": this refers to good dispensation; "In God I will praise His word": this refers to the "dispensation of suffering." R. Tanhum said: "We learn it from here: 'I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord' (Ps 66:13); I found trouble and sorrow, but I called upon the name of the Lord (Job 1:21)."

Even a Jewish burial service encompasses God's perfection and the goodness of God's creations: Once the grave is completely filled with earth, the prayer of Tzidduk HaDin (צידוק הדין)—justification of the Divine decree—is recited. With this moving prayer, the mourners declare their acceptance of the Divine decree and pray to God to have mercy upon the living (Lamm 60).

SATAN

Perhaps one of the most difficult concepts in trying to understand the concept of "evil" in traditional Jewish texts is the identity and entity of Satan. English Hebrew Bible translations are not consistent in their word choice when translating שטן. Occasionally, they view שטן as a proper name; in other

places, the word is translated as "adversary" and refers to either (a) a human adversary, as in 1Kings 11:14, "And the Lord raised up an adversary against Solomon, Hadad the Edomite; he was of the royal house in Edom" (Revised Standard Version); or (b) God's adversary, as in Job 2:6, where שטן is clearly a proper name: "The Lord said to Satan, 'Very well, he is in your power; only spare his life'" (New Revised Standard Version).

Although the word שטן ("Satan") appears approximately 30 times in the Hebrew Bible, used either as a proper name or as "adversary," it is not as prominent in the Mishnah or the Tosefta (a supplement to the Mishnah), and, as discussed above, they refer generally to a being who accompanies the wicked man. For example, Tosefta Sha Mas. Baba Bathra at 17 (18):3 stated, "If you see a wicked man setting out on a journey and you wish to go by the same route, anticipate your journey by three days or postpone it for three days, because Satan accompanies the wicked man."

References to Satan in the Talmud are much more numerous. There are almost 90 Talmudic references to Satan as an entity, and his identity is clearly adversarial—either as a foe of humans (where Satan upon occasion is the victor) or as God's nemesis (where Satan is always vanquished). As man's adversary and accuser, he is without independent power—Satan's power must be derived from God. In Talmudic writings, Satan is identified with the evil inclination and with the angel of death: "Resh Lakish said: Satan, the evil prompter, and the Angel of Death are all one. He is called Satan" (Mas. Baba Bathra 16a). And perhaps as a throwback to the Genesis 1 narrative, when Satan does appear to humans he is often in the form of a seductress. For example, one Talmudic text states, "One day Satan appeared to him as a woman on the top of a palm tree. Grasping the tree, he [a man] went climbing up: but when he reached half-way up the tree he [Satan] let him go, saying 'Had they not proclaimed in Heaven, "Take heed of R. Akiba and his learning," I would have valued your life at two ma'ahs'" (Mas. Kiddushin 81a). Another says, "A Tanna taught: '[Satan] comes down to earth and seduces, then ascends to heaven and awakens wrath; permission is granted to him and he takes away the soul'" (Mas. Baba Bathra 16a).

Not surprisingly, Jews make relatively few references to Satan during worship. During the evening worship service (Ma'ariv), the concluding prayer (Hashkivenu)[3] says,

> Enable us, O Lord our God, to lie down in peace . . . save us quickly for your name's sake, protect us, remove from us the adversary (שטן), the pestilence, the sword, the famine, the anxiety. . . . Blessed art thou, O Lord, who guards His nation Israel eternally.

(It should be noted, however, that Sephardic prayer books omit the Hebrew word for Satan on the Sabbath on the holidays. Otherwise, Satan is back in.)

The High Holidays prayer book (Mahzor) contains references to Satan: six Biblical verses, the initial letters of which form the acrostic "Kerah Satan" ("tear Satan") are recited; one of the purposes of the blasts of the Shofar on the High Holidays according to Rabbi Isaac is to confound and confute Satan (Mas. Baba Bathra 16a); and in the Hinneni prayer (the prayer of the Hazzan [cantor] before the Musaf Amidah), there is a sentence in which he pleads, "And rebuke Satan that he accuse me not."

ADAM'S DEMONIC FAMILY

Despite the fact that there is only one biblical reference to Lilith ("Wildcats shall meet with hyenas, goat-demons shall call to each other; there too Lilith shall repose, and find a place to rest"; Isa 34:14), she is perhaps the most famous "evil" female in Jewish demonology. Although the biblical reference is in connection with what horrendous things will happen on the day of vengeance, Lilith's presence in later writings is more pronounced. Midrash Numbers[4] describes her as "Lilith who, when she finds nothing else, turns upon her own children" (Midrash Num 26:16). Midrash Avkir graphically describes the relationship of Adam and Lilith:

> Our teacher Asi said: Adam the protoplast was wholly righteous, and when he saw that death had been decreed [as punishment] through his fault, he gained control over himself with fasting, kept away from his wife, and slept alone. A *lilītu*-demon named *Pīznā* came across him and became enamored with his handsomeness, for his handsome appearance was comparable to [that of] the solar disc. She slept with him [and eventually] gave birth from him to demons and *lilû*-devils.
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> The name of the first-born son of Adam the protoplast was Agarīmus. Agarīmus went and married a *lilītu*-demon [named] Imrīt, [and] she bore him 92,000 myriads of demons and *lilû*-devils. The name of the first-born son of Agarīmus was Abelmus. He went and married Gōfrīt the *lilītu*-demon, and she bore him 88,000 myriads of demons and *lilû*-devils. The name of the first-born son of Abelmus was Akrīmus, and he went and [married] Afīznā, the daughter of Pūznā the *lilītu*-demon who was dwelling . . . [in] the mountain, and she bore him 3,000 myriads of demons and *lilû*-devils . . . the entire universe became filled with them . . . the Angel of Death, and he strikes dead anyone who encounters him. (Gaster 48–49)

The Talmud states that she is a danger to women in childbirth as well as to men who sleep alone (Shab 151b). The Testament of Solomon[5] quotes Lilith as saying,

> [B]y night I sleep not, but go my rounds over all the world, and visit women in childbirth. And divining the hour I take my stand; and if I am

lucky, I strangle the child. But if not, I retire to another place. For I cannot for a single night retire unsuccessful. For I am a fierce spirit, of myriad names and many shapes. And now hither, now thither I roam. And to westering parts I go my rounds. (Testament of Solomon 58)

Another Talmudic version is less detailed:

R. Yermiyah b. El'azar said, "All those years that Adam the protoplast spent in banishment he was engendering spirits, demons, and *lilû*-devils, for scripture states *and Adam lived for 130 years, and then he engendered one in his image and in his likeness*" (Gen 5:3). It follows that up to that point (i.e., year 130) he had not engendered any in his likeness! They (the assembly) objected: R. Meir used to say, Adam the protoplast was a great *Hasid*: when he saw that death had been decreed (as punishment) through his fault, he sat fasting for 130 years, kept away from his wife for 130 years, and wore clothes made of fig-leaves for 130 years. (b. 'Erub 18b)

The most famous tale of Lilith originates in a medieval work called The Alphabet of Ben-Sira, a work whose relationship to the conventional streams of Judaism is tenuous. Although the idea of Eve having a predecessor is also not new to Ben Sira, and can be found in Genesis Rabbah, those traditions make no mention of Lilith, and, in fact, do not mesh well with Ben Sira's version of the story:

After God created Adam, who was alone, He said, "It is not good for man to be alone" (Gen 2:18). He then created a woman for Adam, from the earth, as He had created Adam himself, and called her Lilith. Adam and Lilith began to fight. She said, "I will not lie below," and he said, "I will not lie beneath you, but only on top. For you are fit only to be in the bottom position, while I am to be in the superior one." Lilith responded, "We are equal to each other inasmuch as we were both created from the earth." But they would not listen to one another. When Lilith saw this, she pronounced the Ineffable Name and flew away into the air. Adam stood in prayer before his Creator: "Sovereign of the universe!" he said, "The woman you gave me has run away." At once, the Holy One, blessed be He, sent these three angels to bring her back.

Said the Holy One to Adam, "If she agrees to come back, fine. If not, she must permit one hundred of her children to die every day." The angels left God and pursued Lilith, whom they overtook in the midst of the sea, in the mighty waters wherein the Egyptians were destined to drown. They told her God's word, but she did not wish to return. The angels said, "We shall drown you in the sea."

"Leave me!" she said. "I was created only to cause sickness to infants. If the infant is male, I have dominion over him for eight days after his birth, and if female, for twenty days."

> When the angels heard Lilith's words, they insisted she go back. But she swore to them by the name of the living and eternal God: "Whenever I see you or your names or your forms in an amulet, I will have no power over that infant." She also agreed to have one hundred of her children die every day. Accordingly, every day one hundred demons perish, and for the same reason, we write the angels' names on the amulets of young children. When Lilith sees their names, she remembers her oath, and the child recovers.

EVIL SPEECH

Generally speaking, *lashon ha-ra* (לָשׁוֹן הָרָע) is the prohibition against slandering, slurring, or defaming one's fellow Jews, even when the derogatory remarks are true (Lev 19:16). However, there is an exception: Defaming individuals who constantly cause strife and dissension is permissible (Pe 1:1, 16a). The sages constantly stressed the severity of this prohibition, asserting that slander destroys three persons: "he who relates the slander, he who accepts it, and he about whom it is told" (Ar 15b). They recognized the power of the spoken word to build or ruin human relationships, and considered the tongue the "elixir of life" (Lev R 16:2) and the primary source of good and evil (Lev R 33:1). It was even considered forbidden to spread discreditable comments that the slanderer would have told to the person himself (Tos to Ar 15b).

The Bible and the Talmud have many examples of righteous and wicked individuals who violated this rule, but this is not surprising because virtually every character in the Hebrew Bible violated rules! Sarah is accused of slandering Abraham when she spoke about his advanced age and inability to beget children (Gen 18:12–15; Pe 1:1, 16a). Joseph was punished for the "evil reports" he spread about his brothers (Gen 37:2; Pe 1:1, 15d–16a). Miriam was punished by God for slandering Moses (Num 12:1–15). The spies were punished for their reports concerning Israel (Num 14:36–37). The division of the kingdom of David is attributed to his listening to slander (Shab 56a–b). On the other hand, Jeroboam king of Israel (I Kings 12:20) was worthy of being counted together with the kings of Judah (Hos 1:1) because he did not listen to slander against Amos (Amos 7:10–11; Pes 87b). The murder of Isaiah by Manasseh was considered divine retribution for Isaiah's slurs against the Jewish people (Isa 6:5; Yev 49b). Haman was considered the most skillful of all in engaging in *Lashon ha-ra* (Meg 13b).

Indirect slander was also forbidden, and the sages cautioned against speaking in praise of a person to prevent mentioning the person's bad deeds and qualities (Mas. Baba Bathra 164b). Equally objectionable under this heading is the implicit form of slander exemplified by the statement, "Do not speak of him; I want to know nothing about him," in which one expresses a disinclination to listen, not because of a distaste for slander, but because of the implied

unworthiness of the subject (see Maim. Yad, De'ot 7:4). Although the hearer was cautioned not to believe slander, he still was permitted to safeguard himself cautiously in case the reports prove true (Nid 61a).

The rabbis often emphasized the rigorous punishments for those engaging in "evil speech." They are immediately chastised by plagues (ARN 19), and rain is withheld because of them (Ta'an 7b). Croup comes to the world on account of slander (Shab 33a–b), and whoever makes derogatory remarks about deceased scholars is cast into Gehinnom (Ber 19a). Slanderers will not enjoy the Shekinah (Divine Presence; Sot 42a), and a bearer of evil tales is considered as denying God (Ar 15b).

Within this narrow concept, *slander* is used generally to describe defaming an individual by either true *or* untrue statements. *Evil speech* is generally used in the sense of defaming someone by spreading false tales. Whoever relates or accepts slander deserves to be cast to the dogs (Pes 118a) and stoned (Ar 15b). (Slander is generally an untrue statement made that is implied to be factual; *lashon ha-ra* is more general.)

The Talmud delineated the repentance for those wishing to atone for this sin. Scholars were advised to engage in Torah study, whereas simple persons were urged to humble themselves (Ar 15b). The robe of the high priest and the incense aided in achieving atonement for this sin (Zev 88b). Mar, the son of Ravina, on concluding his daily prayer added the following: "My God, keep my tongue from evil and my lips from speaking guile" (Ber 17a), a formula that has been added at the end of the *Amidah*.

EVIL EYE

According to the Mishnah, the "evil eye" (עין הרע) (*ayin ha-ra*), expresses the idea that there are some people who, merely by looking at a victim, can cause harm—both bodily and financially. Pirkei Avot (Ethics of the Fathers)[6] has three references to the "evil eye":

> He said to them: Go and see which is the evil way which a man should avoid. Rabbi Eliezer said, an evil eye. (Pirkei Avot 2:14)
>
> Rabbi Joshua said: The evil eye, the evil desire and hatred of his fellow creatures put a man out of the world. (Pirkei Avot 2:16)
>
> Whosoever possesses these three qualities belongs to the disciples of Abraham our father: a generous eye, a humble spirit, and a meek soul. But he who possesses the three opposite qualities—an evil eye, a proud spirit, and a haughty soul—is of the disciples of Balaam the wicked. (Pirkei Avot 5:22)

The Talmud has several references to the "evil eye." For example, in Gen. Rabbah 45:5 Sarah uses her evil eye on Hagar, causing her to be banished

to the wilderness; Gen. Rabbah 84:10 explains that because of the evil eye cast upon Joseph by his brothers, Joseph was taken to Egypt; and Num. Rabbah 12:4 explains the breaking of the first tablets of the law as having been caused by an "evil eye."

There are a number of superstitious practices to ward off the harmful effects of the evil eye, for example, spitting out three times when a person seems to be at risk. Even today some people, when praising others, will add, "[L]et it be without the evil eye" (in the Yiddish form, *kenenhora*), meaning I do not intend my praise to suggest that I am enviously casting a malevolent glance.

AMULET

An amulet is a small object that a person wears, carries, or offers to a deity because he or she believes that it will magically bestow a particular power or form of protection. The conviction that a symbol, form, or concept provides protection, promotes well-being, or brings good luck is common to all societies: even today, some people carry a favorite penny or a rabbit's foot.

In 1979, two silver amulets dating to the late seventh to sixth centuries BCE were discovered in a burial cave in Ketef Hinnom, outside of Jerusalem. The smaller of these amulets reads, "Blessed be [he or she] by Yahweh, the helper and dispeller of evil. May Yahweh bless you (and) protect you, and may he cause his face to shine upon you and grant you peace." The larger amulet mentions "the covenant" and Yahweh's "graciousness to those who love him," refers to Yahweh as "our restorer," and concludes with the benediction "May Yahweh bless you and protect you, may he cause his face to shine" (this blessing is a slight variant of the priestly benediction in Numbers 6:22). The tiny rolled-up scrolls were no doubt intended to be worn as amulets to safeguard their owners. The prophylactic nature of the two tiny scrolls to prevent sickness and disease is evident from the words *bless* and *keep*. Apparently, all humans, whether "great" or "small," are spiteful and vain—and, as history has demonstrated, the more "important" the individual, the greater the likely these tendencies are to manifest themselves. The Ketef Hinnom amulets must have been regarded as having an apotropaic or ritual observance that is intended to turn away evil effect, as is emphasized in the smaller amulet by a reference to the deity as the "rebuker of evil": "May he/she be blessed by YHWH, the warrior and the rebuker of Evil" (Barkay, Vaughn, Lundberg, & Zuckerman, 2004; see also Barkay, Lundberg, Vaughn, Zuckerman, & Zuckerman, 2003).

Although many Jewish homes have a mezuzah[7] on the doorpost, a mezuzah is not considered an amulet. Rather, it fulfills a biblical injunction to have God's word be a sign on your doorpost (Exod 11:7,13). Similarly, Tefillin[8] (prayer phylacteries) are not amulets; they too fulfill the commandment in Deut 6:8 that they are to be a "sign upon the heart and upon the hand."

Many contemporary Jews wear jewelry that could be regarded as amulets. For example, a Star of David, which is worn often as a pendant on a chain, contains a six-pointed star. The six points symbolize that God rules over the universe and protects us from all six directions: north, south, east, west, up, and down. King David used this symbol in the battlefield on his shield as an omen from God.

Another piece of jewelry that can be viewed as an amulet is a hamsa (also known as the "hand of Miriam"). The hamsa serves as an ancient talismanic way of averting the evil eye and providing a "protecting hand" or "Hand of God." The hamsa often appears in stylized form, as a hand with three fingers raised, and sometimes with two thumbs arranged symmetrically.

REPENTANCE

The phrase "Repentance, prayer, and charity remove a bad decree" sets the tone to the days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur[9] more than any other in the High Holy Days prayer book. Indeed, of the three, repentance is probably the most significant because the period of time between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is called the "Ten Days of Repentance."

Within this context, repentance occurs once a person realizes that he or she has sinned, acknowledges the error, and takes a personal oath never to repeat the sin again. In this manner the person is in effect changing and becoming a new person.

In the Hebrew Bible, תשובה (*teshuvah*, literally "return") is the term used for *repentance*, and the Bible states that repentance brings pardon and forgiveness of sin. Apart from repentance, no other activities, such as sacrifices or religious ceremonies, can secure pardon and forgiveness of sin ("Let the wicked forsake his way, and the man of iniquity his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have compassion upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon"; Isa 55:7). The Torah (five books of Moses) distinguishes between offenses against God and offenses against another human. In the first case, the manifestation of repentance consists of confession of one's sin before God (Lev 5:5; Num 5:7), the essential part being a solemn promise and firm resolve not to commit the same sin again; and making certain prescribed offerings (Lev 5:1-20). Repentance of a sin against God generally leads to the deity's forgiveness. In some cases, individuals or nations repent of their sins and are spared God's judgment (Gen 4:7; Lev 4, 5; Deut 4:30, 30:2; I Kings 8:33, 48; Hosea 14:2; Jer 3:12, 31:18, 36:3; Ezek 18:30-32; Isa 54:22, 55:6-10; Joel 2:12; and Jonah 2:10).

Offenses against another human require, in addition to confession and sacrifice, restitution in full of whatever has been wrongfully obtained or withheld from the aggrieved, with, in effect, a 20% interest penalty (Lev 5:20–26). If the injured party has died, restitution must be made to the heir; if there is

no heir, it must be given to the priest, who officiates at the sacrifice made for the remission of the sin (Num 5:7–9).

There are other examples of repentance mentioned in the Bible. These include pouring out water (I Sam 7:6); prayer (II Sam 12:16); self-affliction, such as fasting (Ezra 9:5; Neh 1:4, 9:1; Esth 4:3; Ps 35:13, 69:10, 109:24; Isa 58:4; Dan 6:18, 9:3; Joel 2:12; and Neh 9:1); wearing sackcloth (although there are over 40 instances of wearing sackcloth in the Hebrew Bible, only one occurs in the Torah: Gen 37:34, "Then Jacob tore his garments, and put sackcloth on his loins"); and sitting and sleeping on the ground (I Kings 21:27; Joel 2:13; Jon 3:5). However, the prophets criticized these forms of repentance as basically self-aggrandizing and focused on a change in the sinner's mental and spiritual attitude ("Rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy, and repenteth him of the evil" (Joel 2:13).

Many rabbinic sources state that repentance is an essential aspect of the existence of this world, and was one of the seven provisions that God made before the Creation (Pes 54a; Ned 39b; Genesis Rabbah 1). Sincere repentance is equivalent to the rebuilding of the Temple, the restoration of the altar, and the offering of all the sacrifices (Midrash Leviticus Rabbah 7; Sanh 43b).

According to Jewish doctrine, repentance is the prerequisite of atonement (Mishna Yoma Chapter 8, 8). Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, derives its significance only from the fact that it is the culmination of the 10 penitential days with which the Jewish religious year begins. It is of no consequence without repentance. However, repentance and the Day of Atonement can only absolve one from sins committed against God; sins against another person are absolved only when restitution has been made and the pardon of the offended party has been obtained (Yoma 87a; Mishneh Torah Teshuva 2:9).

Jewish doctrine holds that it is never too late, even on the day of death, to return to God with sincere repentance: "as the sea is always open for everyone who wishes to cleanse himself, so are the gates of repentance always open to the sinner" (Midrash Deut Rabbah 2.; Midrash Psalms 43)—the hand of God is continually stretched out to receive a sinner (BM 58:2). Indeed, one Talmudic tractate states that one who has repented is more worthy than one who has never sinned (Ber 34b).

CONCLUSION

Abraham J. Heschel wrote in *God in Search of Man*, "The world is in flames, consumed by evil. Is it possible that there is no one who cares? . . . [367] . . . What have we done to make such crimes [the Holocaust] possible? What are we doing to make such crimes impossible?" [369].

Perhaps the Bible and the Talmudic sources provide a starting point. The New Testament quotes Jesus giving a solution: "In everything, do to others

what you would want them to do to you. This is what is written in the Law and in the Prophets" (Matt 7:12), and "Do to others as you want them to do to you" (Luke 6:31).

The Sage Hillel, an elder contemporary of Jesus, used a negative structure to express the same basic sentiments. When asked by a potential convert to sum up the entire Torah concisely, he answered, "What is hateful to you, do not to your neighbor: that is the whole Torah, while the rest is the commentary thereof; go and learn it" (Shab 31a).

Perhaps the essence of "evil in the Hebrew Bible, Mishnah, and Talmud" is the last part of Hillel's answer to the potential proselyte: "[T]he rest is the commentary thereof; go and learn it." In other words, avoid doing evil because God said, "It is good."

Abbreviations of Tractates

Ar	Arakhin
ARN	Avot de-RaMas. Baba Bathra i Natan
Avot	Avot
AZ	Avodah Zarah
Mas. Baba Bathra	Bava Batra
Bekh	Bekhorot
Ber	Berakhot
Betz	Betzah
Bik	Bikkurim
BK	Bava Kamma
BM	Bava Metzia
De	Demai
DER	Derekh Eretz RaMas. Baba Bathra ah
DEZ	Derekh Eretz Zuta
Ed	Eduyyot
Er	Eruvin
Ger	Gerim
Git	Gittin
Hag	Hagigah
Hal	Hallah
Hor	Horayot
Hul	Hullin
Ka	Kallah

(*continued*)

Abbreviations of Tractates

Kel	Kelim
Ker	Keritot
Ket	KetuMas. Baba Bathra ot
Kid	Kiddushin
Kil	Kilayim
Kin	Kinnim
Kut	Kutim
Maas	Maaserot
Mak	Makkot
Makh	Makhshirin
Me	Meilah
Meg	Megillah
Men	Menahot
Mez	Mezuzah
Mid	Middot
Mik	Mikvaot
MK	Moed Katan
MSh	Maaser Sheni
Naz	Nazir
Ned	Nedarim
Neg	Negaim
Nid	Niddah
Oh	Ohalot
Or	Orlah
Par	Parah
Pe	Peah
Per Sha	Perek ha-Shalom
Pes	Pesahim
RH	Rosh ha-Shanah
Sanh	Sanhedrin
Sem	Semahot
Shab	ShaMas. Baba Bathra at
Shek	Shekalim
Shev	It
Shevu	Shevuot

Abbreviations of Tractates	
Sof	Soferim
Sot	Sotah
ST	Sefer Torah
Suk	Sukkah
Ta	Taanit
Tam	Tamid
Tef	Tefillin
Tem	Temurah
Ter	Terumot
Toh	Toharot
TY	Tevul Yom
Tz	Tzitzit
Uk	Uktzin
Yad	Yadayim
Yev	Yevamot
Yoma	Yoma
Zav	Zavin
Zev	Zevahim

NOTES

1. The Talmud, a central text of mainstream Judaism, is a compilation of rabbinic discussions of Jewish law, ethics, customs, and history. It has two components: the Mishnah (c. 200 CE), the first written compendium of Judaism's Oral Law; and the Gemara (c. 500 CE), a discussion of the Mishnah and related writings that ventures often onto other subjects and expounds broadly on the Tanakh.

2. The term *rabbis* is used throughout this chapter when referring to the Talmudic writings.

3. Hashkivenu (הַשְׁכִּיבֵנוּ) ("cause us to lie down") is the initial word of the second benediction after the Shema of the daily evening prayer. This prayer for protection during the night is mentioned in the Talmud (Ber. 4b).

4. *Midrash* (literally, "to investigate" or "to study") is a Hebrew term referring to the not exact, but comparative, method of exegesis of biblical texts. The term *midrash* can also refer to a compilation of homiletic teachings on the Tanakh, in the form of legal and ritual parts (Halakhah) and legendary, moralizing, folkloristic, and anecdotal parts (Haggada), and is a valuable source of Jewish interpretations of the Bible.

5. The Testament of Solomon is a pseudepigraphical work, the authorship of which is ascribed to King Solomon. It describes how the Archangel Michael gave Solomon a magical ring that allowed him to control demons and build the Temple.

6. Pirkei Avot ("Ethics of the Fathers") is a compilation of the ethical teachings in the Mishnaic tractate of Avot ("Fathers"), the second-to-last tractate in the order of Nezikin in the Talmud.

7. A mezuzah (מְזוּזָה) is a parchment scroll attached to the doorpost of most rooms in a Jewish home (any room that has two doorposts and an overhead lintel requires a mezuzah, so bathrooms, closets, laundry rooms, boiler rooms, and so forth do not require a mezuzah). The original meaning of the word *mezuzah* is "doorpost" (cf. Ex. 12:7), but a mezuzah has come to also mean the parchment on which the verses of the Torah are inscribed: "and ye shall write them (the words of God) upon the *mezuzot* of thy house and in thy gates" (Deuteronomy 6:4–9, 11:13–21) as well as the case or container in which the parchment is enclosed. The mezuzah consists of a piece of parchment, made from the skin of a clean animal, on which Deuteronomy passages are written in square (Assyrian) characters, traditionally in 22 lines. The parchment is rolled up and inserted in a case with a small opening. On the back of the parchment is the word שַׁדַּי, which means "Almighty"; in addition, the letters stand for the initial letters of יִשְׂרָאֵל שׁוֹמֵר דְּלָתוֹת "Guardian of the doors of Israel." The parchment is so inserted that the word is visible through the opening. It is affixed to the right-hand doorpost of the room, house, or gate, where it is obligatory, in the top third of the doorpost and slanting inward.

8. Tefillin (תְּפִלִּין), usually translated as "phylacteries," are two black leather boxes containing scriptural passages that are bound by black leather straps on the left hand and on the head by men for the morning services on all days of the year except Sabbaths and scriptural holy days. Four passages of the Bible (Ex. 13:1–10 and 11–16; Deut. 6:4–9 and 11:13–21) require Jews to put "these words" (of the Law) for "a sign upon thy hand and a frontlet between thine eyes."

9. Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement (יוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים), is one of the "appointed seasons of the Lord, holy convocations," a day of fasting and atonement, occurring on the Tenth of Tishri. It is the climax of the "Ten Days of Penitence" and the most important day in the Jewish liturgical year.

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